

**Peacebuilding as Small State Foreign Policy:
Norway's Peace Engagement in a Changing International Context**

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Abstract

This article examines the emergence and transformation of Norway's peace engagement in the context of changing international relations. Focusing on foreign policy discourses and practices, the article portrays peace engagement as value-based efforts to support resolution of distant intrastate conflicts, and a strategy to promote Norway's interests and influence in international relations. The article also argues that changing international relations after the turn of the century has challenged and reoriented Norway's peace engagement in a more realist direction. Foreign policy discourses and practices are increasingly based on a broad notion of interests that also includes ideals of peace, democracy and development. This means that peace engagement can support a domestic political consensus on foreign policy, and simultaneously promote Norway's standing, relevance and influence in international relations. Peace engagement has thus been institutionalized as a foreign policy that promotes peace while also addressing the challenges associated with smallness in international relations.

Keywords: small state, foreign policy, discourse, peace, Norway, Sri Lanka, Burma/Myanmar

Introduction

Studies of international relations have tended to privilege major actors in world politics, their economic and security interests, and hard power capabilities and strategies. Small states have been given less overall attention and their international strategies are often portrayed as ‘playing it small’ by aligning themselves to major powers in security alliances to overcome their lack of hard power capabilities. This article examines a case that seems to challenge this representation. Norway has since the end of the Cold War sought to achieve a position of international influence by becoming a major actor within “engagement politics”. This includes a strong legacy of international humanitarian and development aid, but also an increased focus on peace engagement and climate change diplomacy (Lunde, Thune, Fleischer, Grünfeld and Sending 2008; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009a, 2009b; Thune and Lunde 2013). Peace engagement has become an important and visible element of such engagement politics. Norway has gained publicity as a facilitator for peace negotiations and donor for peacebuilding in several intrastate conflicts (Figure 1). The facilitator role was initiated with the Israel-Palestine peace process in the early 1990s and has been furthered in other conflict situations since then, especially in Colombia, Guatemala, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, but also in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan and Libya. Norway has also participated in joint peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan, Somalia, Timor Leste, Haiti, Nepal and other countries. The most recent additions to this list include facilitation of negotiations between the Government of Colombia and The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected areas in Burma/Myanmar.

Norway’s peace engagement has received recognition from Western allies and international development organizations, but Norway has also come under strong criticism. While the initial success in the Middle East peace process created optimism about the prospects for peace, the subsequent lack of substantive conflict resolution raised serious doubts about Norway’s capability as a relatively powerless mediator in a situation with strong asymmetry between

the conflict protagonists (Said 2001; Waage 2005, 2007). Norway has also come under criticism in Sri Lanka for trying to impose an international liberal peace agenda and for being unable to effectively address the contextual complexity of political actors and dynamics (Goodhand, Klem and Sørnbø 2011; Liyanage 2008; Stokke and Uyangoda 2011). More recently, Norwegian peacebuilding has received critical attention in Burma/Myanmar where Norway is seen as working closely with the government while lessening its links to national minorities and the pro-democracy movement. Norway's engagement in both Sri Lanka and Burma/Myanmar has also been criticized for being narrow peacebuilding initiatives with weak strategic links to substantive conflict resolution and political transformations.

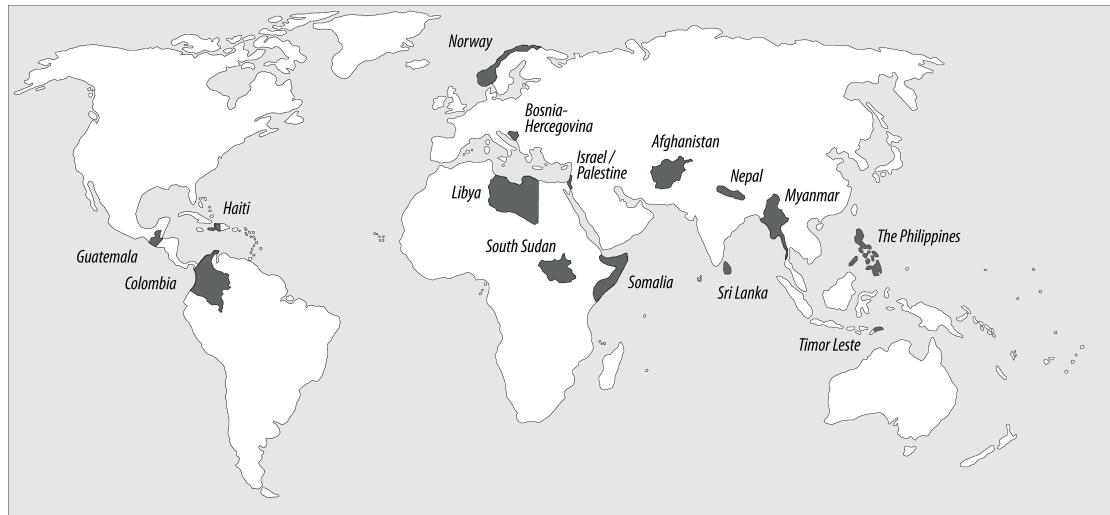


Figure 1. Key cases of Norway's peace engagement after the Cold War.

Norway's role in Israel/Palestine, Sri Lanka, Burma/Myanmar and elsewhere raise a set of critical questions about why a small state engages in intrastate conflicts where it has no obvious strategic interests; how such engagement is constructed discursively and institutionalized in foreign policy, and; how the discourses and practices of peace engagement are being transformed in the context of changing international relations. In order to answer these questions, the article is organized in four sections, where the first provides a brief review of

studies of small states in international relations. This is followed, in the second section, by an analysis of the discursive construction of Norway's international interests, focusing especially on the emergence of peace engagement discourse in the 1990s. The third section examines how the discourse on peace engagement is translated into practical strategies for liberal peacebuilding. Finally, the fourth section provides an analysis of how changing international relations have transformed Norway's foreign policy and peace engagement in a more realist direction.

Norway's foreign policy discourse and practice	From 1945 to ca. 1990	From 1990s to mid-2000s	From mid-2000s to present
Framing of Norway's international context	Cold War bipolar world order	Post-Cold War unipolar world order	Globalization and multi-polar world order
Representations of Norway's identity	A small and vulnerable state	A peace nation with humanitarian power	An actor in a small and changing world
General foreign policy orientation	Primacy of realist security politics	Co-existence of security and value diplomacy	New realism based on broadly defined interests
General approach to peace engagement	Participation in UN peacekeeping	Orthodox approach to liberal peace	Orthodox and conservative approaches to liberal peace
Illustrative cases of peace engagement	Congo (1960-64) Lebanon (1978-98)	Israel/Palestine (1990s) Sri Lanka (2000s)	Afghanistan (2000s-2010s) Burma/Myanmar (2010s)

Figure 2. Norway's foreign policy discourses and practices in a changing international context.

Figure 2 provides a summary of the article's analytical structure and findings. The core argument is that Norway's peace engagement emerged as an expression of international idealism stemming from domestic political constellations, but has become a form of interest-based foreign policy that is reflective of changing international relations. As the international political space for liberal peacebuilding widened after the end of the Cold War, peace engagement became a prioritized foreign policy, initially conceived as value-based promotion of peaceful coexistence, but gradually also as a means to

enhance Norway's standing, relevance and influence in international politics. The article also argues that changing international relations after the turn of the century has furthered this reorientation of idealist engagement politics in a realist direction. Whereas Norway's role in the peace process in Sri Lanka illustrates the hegemony of liberal peacebuilding in the 1990s and early 2000s, Norway's on-going engagement in peacebuilding in Burma/Myanmar demonstrates this realist framing of peace engagement.

The article is based on the author's close attention to Norway's peace engagement for the last two decades as an observer and occasional commentator in Norway, and as a researcher on politics of peace and democracy in Sri Lanka since the early 1990s and in Burma/Myanmar since 2010. The analysis also draws on a broad range of textual sources (mass media, policy documents and political debates) as well as a number of interviews and conversations with key observers and actors in Norway, Sri Lanka and Burma/Myanmar.

Small States in International Relations

Studies of international relations have traditionally been state- and security-centred fields that have given prime attention to "great powers" rather than micro, small or middle states (Ingebritsen, Neumann, Gstöhl and Beyer 2006; Nayak and Selbin 2010). Although the period since the end of World War II has been marked by a growing number of small states, especially due to the break-up of European colonial empires and the Soviet Union, this has not been matched by scholarly attention to the roles and strategies of small states in international relations (Steinmetz and Wivel 2010). Neumann and Gstöhl (2006) explain this paradoxical situation with reference to the overall primacy of security studies, the preoccupation with superpower rivalry and the dominance of realism during the Cold War, all supporting prime attention to dominant powers in a bipolar world order. Small states have been seen as a residual category and their smallness has typically been equated with weakness and irrelevance, despite

examples of small states holding significant issue-specific power, for example as international financial hubs or as suppliers of key resources.

While relative neglect of small states has been the dominant tendency, it should be acknowledged that the period from the 1950s to the 1970s did produce some notable exceptions to this general pattern. Following the pioneer work of Fox (1959) there has been a number of studies of how small states have used strategic alignments to compensate for limited capability to safeguard their own security (Keohane 1969; Rothstein 1968). Norway's reliance on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to defend its sovereignty during the Cold War is only one example of this (Holst 1985; Udgaard 1973). It should also be mentioned that there was a number of studies in the 1970s that systematically examined state size as a determinant of both economic performance and behaviour in international politics (Baehr 1975). Neumann and Gstöhl (2006) observe, however, that most of the hypotheses that were generated about the determining role of state size has been proven to be wrong and that the realist/neo-realist perspectives have provided few analytical alternatives to the deterministic focus on state size, thus creating an analytical impasse and decline in interest for small states after the 1970s.

Post-realist perspectives and debates within international relations – neo-liberal institutionalism and social constructivism – have, in contrast, provided new analytical opportunities for studying small states in international politics. Neo-liberal institutionalism, on the one hand, has brought attention to the increased importance of regional and international organizations in the context of increased international interdependence (e.g. the European Union). Such organizations have produced new arenas and opportunities for non-dominant actors to pursue their international interests, while being attentive to the cost of engagement and the risk of jeopardizing their sovereignty. The growth of international organizations thus calls into question the realist assumption that smallness is equated with weakness in international relations (Steinmetz and Wivel 2010). Social constructivism, on the other hand, has brought attention to the role of identity, ideas and norms in international relations (Wendt 1999).

The emphasis here is on the construction of identities and interests in small states as a basis for institutionalized foreign policy in regard to different arenas of world politics, including discursive politics such as norm entrepreneurship in international relations (Ingebritsen 2006).

The three approaches to small state studies that have been mentioned above – realism/neo-realism, neo-liberal institutionalism and social constructivism – have failed to produce a vibrant field of small state studies, but nevertheless provided analytical pointers for empirical investigations. While the realist/neo-realist notion of capability overstates the links between state smallness and weakness, it draws critical attention to power imbalances and the associated strategies of alignment. Likewise, the focus on international institutions points to the diversification of spaces and strategies for small state politics. Finally, the focus on political discourse highlights the importance of understanding constructions of identities and interests as a basis for understanding strategies.

The present article is especially informed by social constructivism and its focus on discursive politics. Discourse analysis examines how socially constructed meaning frames political processes; thereby making some political practices seem legitimate and necessary while precluding others (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002; Torfing 1999). A discourse constitutes a temporary fixing of meaning built around relatively stable nodal points and chains of equivalence, but discourses are never completely fixed and there are always spaces for contestation even when there is considerable inertia to change (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). Discourses define political spaces by normalizing and legitimizing certain kinds of practices, but discourses may also be altered through alternative practices. The significance of this for the present article is that it highlights that Norway's peace diplomacy is framed by the discursive representation of Norway's identity, interests and international context. It also points to the inseparability of discourse and practice, for example between peace engagement discourse and peacebuilding strategies. Based on these general observations, the following section will briefly examine the construction of Norway's international interests

before turning to the specific peace engagement discourse that emerged after the Cold War.

Norway's Small State Identity and International Context

Why does a small state like Norway engage in resolution of distant intrastate conflicts where it has no immediate economic or strategic interests? The dominant discourse on peace engagement in Norway, especially in the 1990s, holds that peace engagement is an altruistic contribution towards a better world by a peaceful nation that has the values, competence and economic resources to do so. A second discourse, which has become more prominent in recent years, holds that peace engagement may also be beneficial for Norway's own interests, in addition to being a contribution to peace as a global public good (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009a, 2009b; Thune and Lunde 2013). These contrasting representations indicate that understanding Norway's engagement politics requires analytical attention to the discursive construction of its identity, interests and international context, and how these have changed over time.

A small state in a changing world

The most striking nodal point in foreign policy discourse in Norway during the Cold War was the centrality of "smallness" and "vulnerability" (Leira 2007; Riste 2001). The core argument was that the smallness of Norway means that it has limited influence on international relations that affect its security and economic development while Norway's peripheral but geostrategic location in Northern Europe adds to its vulnerability. The smallness and vulnerability of Norway was also seen as making it both possible and necessary to maintain political consensus on foreign policy, particularly on questions of security and alliance politics (Kjøllberg 2007; Riste 2001).

The identity as a small and vulnerable state has played a key role in framing Norwegian foreign policy. Riste (2001) identifies three general positions in the history of Norway's foreign policy – neutralism, idealism (or "moralism") and

realism – that have all been shaped by the interests and vulnerabilities of the small state. While neutralism is a defensive withdrawal from international power politics, idealism and realism seek to overcome the perceived lack of power by pursuing influence through value diplomacy or participation in alliance politics. Neutralism was especially prominent in the early period after independence in 1905, as a strategy to safeguard both the sovereignty of the new state and the economic interests of Norway's shipping industry. Idealism gained a prominent position in the period between the two world wars when Norway's support for international cooperation reflected both international idealism at the time and the domestic politics of social movements and political parties (Knutsen, Sørbo and Gjerdåker 1995; Leira 2002). Realism became the dominant position during and after World War II, when Norway became a partner in US-led alliance politics, especially through NATO (Holst 1985; Udgaard 1973).

Although different periods have been marked by the dominance of one of these positions, Norway's foreign policy is also characterized by a co-existence of elements from all three. This is also true for the contemporary period, when popular concerns about self-determination have kept Norway outside the European Union while realism has made Norway an active participant in European economic collaboration (Østerud 2005). Likewise, there is a balancing act between idealism and realism in Norway's participation in international security politics, most clearly seen in the paradox that Norway has pursued a role as international peace promoter and simultaneously participated in international military operations (Harpviken and Skjelsbræk 2010; Rottem 2007). These and other examples show that Norwegian foreign policy has been marked by a shifting and uneasy coexistence of realism, idealism and neutralism, producing foreign policies that seem contradictory but may also accommodate diverse domestic interests and maintain overall foreign policy consensus (Riste 2001). This can be explained with reference to an inter-party emphasis on the need for inter-party consensus in foreign policy, given Norway's perceived smallness and vulnerability. Concessions to Christian Democrats and Socialists on questions of North/South collaboration thus emerged as an instrument for

achieving inter-party consensus on Norway's integration in US-led security politics during the Cold War.

The balance between idealism and realism has shifted after the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, Norway's foreign policy was characterized by the dominance of realist security politics over idealist value diplomacy (Græger and Leira 2005; Matlary 2002). This changed in the 1990s when ideals and soft power diplomacy gained new prominence internationally (Melissen 2005; Nye 2004). This shift can be explained with reference to reduced security threats after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but also the growing importance of international institutions and laws as well as increased public openness and debate on foreign policy. Such changes widened the space for small states in international relations, reducing the security imperative while facilitating public diplomacy and norm entrepreneurship (Ingebritsen 2006). This is reflected in Norway's changing combination of security and value diplomacy. Norway's general foreign policy orientation has thus shifted from a strong primacy of realism and territorial sovereignty during the Cold War to a broader and less territorial notion of security in the post-Cold War period (Græger and Leira 2005; Heier 2006; Lange, Pharo and Østerud 2009; Matlary and Østerud 2007). Simultaneously, there has been an increased emphasis on value diplomacy. Engagement politics, which started from humanitarian assistance and development cooperation, has been widened to include peace facilitation and peacebuilding since the early 1990s, and climate change mitigation after the turn of the century (Matlary 2002; Skånland 2008; Østerud 2006).

The shifting balance between security and value diplomacy has been accompanied by changes at the level of identity discourse. Most notably, the small state identity has been modified by new assertions about Norway as a major actor in certain sectors. While it is acknowledged that Norway is small in terms of population size (approximately 5 millions), it is argued that it has disproportionate strength in other aspects (e.g. the international position in shipping, oil and seafood) (Lunde et.al. 2008; Rottem and Hønneland 2008). In the post-Cold War context it has been increasingly recognized that this both

means that Norway has interests that extend far beyond its territorial borders and that positions of power in specific sectors may also provide influence in other areas. Norway's construction of itself as a "humanitarian power" and "peace nation" in the 1990s can thus be seen as an effort by a small state to choose its size and shape its standing and leverage in international relations (Østerud 2006).

The Norwegian peace engagement discourse

The growing emphasis on value diplomacy in Norwegian foreign policy in general runs parallel to a more specific peace engagement discourse that emerged in the 1990s. This discourse revolves around the claims that Norway in values and practices is a "peace nation"; that Norway has distinct qualifications and strategies for peace engagement; and, that peace engagement promotes Norwegian values and interests (Skånland 2008). First, the identity as a "peace nation" is primarily based on contemporary peace engagement, starting with the Middle East peace process, but references are also made to the "Nansen legacy" of international humanitarianism dating back to the 1920s. Second, the claims about Norway's competence are justified with reference to Norway's performance in various peace processes. A more analytical foundation can be traced back to a book by Jan Egeland (1988) entitled *"Impotent Superpower – Potent Small State"*. Egeland argues that Norway has advantages and under-utilized potential for humanitarian interventions and human rights advocacy, most notably: a broad political consensus on foreign policy; few conflicting foreign policy interests; and available funds for foreign assistance. Institutional capability is identified as another precondition, but this was found to be less developed at the time of writing. Egeland argued, however, that this could be changed through strategic interventions to build expertise and develop close ties between the state, NGOs and academic institutions. These ideas shaped Norway's approach to peace in the 1990s, when Egeland played a key role as State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1990 to 1997. Third, the argument that peace engagement reflects and benefits Norwegian values and interests is developed in a series of Government reports to Parliament on development assistance and foreign policy. The reports from the late 1980s and

early 1990s and the broader political discourse around them introduced peace as a goal for development cooperation; broadened the concept of security and linked security to global challenges of under-development, and; argued that Norway could play a lead role in foreign policy areas where it has expertise and resources (Ministry of Development Cooperation 1987; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989, 1992). Subsequent reports and political debates have endorsed peace engagement as a matter of values, but have also presented value diplomacy as part of Norway's interest politics (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1995; 2004; 2009a; 2009b).

The development of the Norwegian peace discourse involved a number of actors and arenas. Skånland (2008) observes for example that mass media played a prominent role in popularizing peace engagement. After the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, Norwegian mass media gave detailed accounts of the Middle East peace process, largely conveying the actors' own stories. The overall narrative was about the critical importance and remarkable success of Norway's peace diplomacy, reaffirmed by reports of international praise. The message was that a small state had achieved what more powerful states, especially USA, had failed to do. In explaining this success the media emphasized the close personal contacts and trust between the peace facilitators and the key actors on both sides of the conflict as well as Norway's impartiality and lack of self-interests. It was also observed that successful facilitation was followed by international recognition that could benefit Norwegian interests, but this did not alter the representation of Norway as an altruistic peace nation. Finally, it was commonly argued that Norway could repeat its success in other conflict situations, using the same approach to peace that had been applied in the Middle East.

The new discourse on peace engagement was further developed through political speeches and Government reports to Parliament in the 1990s and early 2000s (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1995, 2004). Peace engagement now emerged as a prioritized field within development cooperation, and the political basis for peace engagement was broadened across the spectre of political parties. Peace facilitation in the Middle East and the peace engagement discourse originated

from Labour Party governments (1990-1997). There was some initial contestation from the Conservative Party, but this opposition was relatively subdued. Peace engagement was instead adopted and furthered by non-socialist coalition governments (1997-2000 and 2001-2005). It was also a prominent part of the foreign policy of the recent “red-green” coalition government (2005-2013) and has been continued by the conservative coalition government that has held power since 2013. This means that all seven parties that are currently represented in Parliament have participated in government coalitions that have endorsed peace engagement. This shows the extent to which engagement politics has become an integral part of the inter-party foreign policy consensus.

The manner in which engagement politics benefit Norwegian interests has been the subject of debate, with changing positions over time. Early representations of peace engagement in media, political documents and speeches emphasized solidarity and altruism as the sole motivation for peace engagement. This emphasis on values and idealism was challenged by the Conservative Party, which argued that peace engagement would take attention away from “real” security interests in the North Atlantic. The counter argument that was developed by the Labour Party held that peace engagement actually benefits such interests because it contributes to a more peaceful and well-regulated world order. Furthermore, peace engagement also came to be seen as a potential source of international recognition, and thus an indirect strategy for promoting Norwegian interests in international arenas (Matlary 2002). The discourse that emerged in the 1990s thus gradually converged around the position that peace engagement is motivated by both idealism and realism, with no major conflict between them (Liland and Kjerland 2003; Støre 2008). This merging of security and value diplomacy brought peace engagement centre stage in foreign policy in the 1990s, but also prepared the ground for realist co-optation of peace engagement discourse a decade later.

Norway's Approach to Peace Engagement

Given the discourses on foreign policy and peace that were outlined above, the next question is how these are translated into strategies for peace promotion? What kind of peace is being pursued and what are the means for achieving it? Starting with the aims, it can be observed that the meaning of peace is implicit rather than explicit, but Norway's approach reflects the international hegemony of liberal peace. Richmond observes that the last two decades have seen a general convergence around a liberal and technocratic understanding of peacebuilding, in which 'conflict is viewed as a problem to be solved and provides an opportunity to export the liberal peace' (2007: 85). The case for liberal peace is based on the thesis that political and economic liberalism are conducive to both interstate and intrastate peace, making liberal democracy and neo-liberal development the universal panacea for ending conflict. While earlier discourses and strategies for liberal peace prioritized democracy promotion, contemporary peacebuilding processes are characterized by a primacy of developmentalism and especially promotion of market-led growth. Justifications for interventions are provided by reference to a "development-peace nexus", where development failure is seen as both cause and effect of conflict and human insecurity (Duffield 2007). Breaking conflict traps through neo-liberal development has thus become a key concern for development cooperation by international organizations and aid donor states (Collier et.al. 2003). A world order comprising stable, market-friendly and liberal democratic states and peacebuilding through neoliberal developmentalism have become the principal aims and means for international peace engagement (Paris 2004).

In terms of intervention strategies, Richmond and Franks (2009) make a distinction between conservative and orthodox approaches to ending conflict. Whereas the conservative approach is characterized by the use of military means to achieve a victor's peace, the orthodox model seeks to build liberal governance and governmentality by way of political negotiations and institutional reforms. Richmond and Franks observe that 'entry into a conflict zone is often predicted on a conservative version of the liberal peace, with the aspiration of moving

towards the orthodox graduation' (2009: 11), but they find few examples of successful transitions from a military initial approach to implementation of the political approach. The orthodox approach, in contrast, prioritizes negotiated settlements but is constrained by the lack of hard power in the face of protracted armed conflicts and has to rely on "ripe moments" in which the warring parties find it meaningful to pursue political rather than military strategies.

Crafting (neo-) liberal peace

Norway's approach to peace reflects the international hegemony of liberal peace and especially the orthodox approach to peacebuilding. Norway's peace engagement in the 1990s was framed by a post-Cold War unipolar world order marked by US liberal internationalism. Intrastate conflicts at the periphery of this liberal world order was the prevalent conflict type and came to be seen as a result of development failure. This provided a widened space for Norway, as an aid donor with a "peace nation" identity and close links to the US, to play a disproportionately large role in international politics.

The Norwegian approach that emerged in this context revolves around facilitating dialog, funding peacebuilding, and coordinating networks of "like-minded" actors to promote negotiated transitions to liberal peace. The design of peace processes where Norway plays a role varies according to contextual constellations and dynamics, but there are also striking similarities that indicate a structuring effect of the Norwegian approach. Norway has developed an approach to peace where the basic building blocks are: invited facilitation of political negotiations rather than interventionist peace making; an emphasis on dialog with the protagonists based on parity of status and the principle of third-party impartiality; instrumental, flexible, and long-term use of humanitarian and development aid to facilitate conflict resolution and peacebuilding; and, implementation of humanitarian rehabilitation and development for peacebuilding through partnerships between state authorities, non-governmental organizations and multilateral aid agencies (Höglund and Svensson 2011; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009a, 2009b).

Norway's approach assigns prime responsibility to the protagonists while placing Norway in a role as facilitating third party with limited power to define the process or outcome of negotiations (Höglund and Svensson 2011). While this leaves the facilitator at the mercy of warring parties and powerful international stakeholders, it may also give the facilitator the freedom to disclaim responsibility in the case of failed peace processes. It can for example be observed that Norway has received international recognition for its peace engagement in Sri Lanka despite the failed peace process. The explanation for this paradox is that the ownership of peace and the responsibility for the resumption and conduct of war was put on the warring parties themselves, while Norway could be portrayed as a dedicated and patient third party. The counterpoint presented by critical scholars and political actors, especially in Sri Lanka, is that the Norwegian approach was an important factor behind the failed process and the subsequent resumption of war (Goodhand, Klem and Sørbrø 2011; Stokke and Uyangoda 2011).

It can be observed that peace processes where Norway plays a prominent role tend to focus on achieving peace deals rather than comprehensive political reforms for substantive democracy (Stokke and Uyangoda 2011; Waage 2005). Norwegian peace processes are often narrow also in the sense that they are confined to formal negotiations between warring parties. Organized parallel negotiations between different factions of the political elite or among civil society actors are uncommon. Likewise, it can be observed that although Norway often pledges long-term commitment, the peace processes are typically characterized by a desire to achieve quick results in the form of ceasefires and peace agreements. Finally, it can be noted that peace processes that are influenced by the Norwegian approach tend to be strongly internationalized, even though Norway upholds the principle of local peace ownership. These general observations support the argument that the Norwegian approach to peace tends to prioritize elitist crafting of peace deals more than structural transformations towards substantive democratization and positive peace. This makes the Norwegian approach congruent with liberal peacebuilding orthodoxy, aiming at producing sovereign states with neo-liberal development and formal

democracy, rather than an emancipatory process aiming at positive peace through substantive conflict transformation (Paris 2004; Richmond and Franks 2009). These tendencies are well exemplified by Norway's peace engagement in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka as a test of liberal peacebuilding

The peace process in Sri Lanka (2001-2008) between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was characterized by extensive internationalization, involving especially Sri Lanka's main aid donors (Japan, USA, European Union and Norway) and with India as an additional stakeholder as a major regional power (Figure 3). Norway played a prominent role as facilitator, donor, and monitor of peace. From being a local conflict that had little relevance beyond the South Asian sub-continent, Sri Lanka thus became a test for international liberal peacebuilding and the Norwegian approach to peace (Liyanage 2008; Stokke and Uyangoda 2011; Uyangoda and Perera 2003).

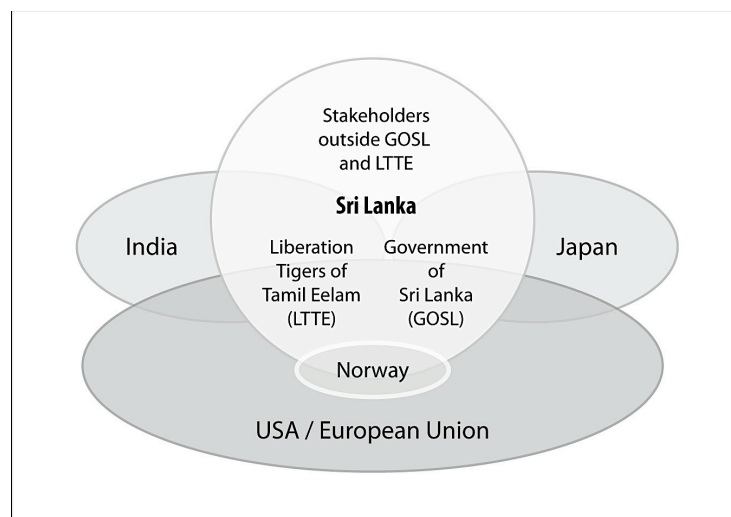


Figure 3. Domestic and international actors in the politics of liberal peace in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan conflict was conducive for Norway's approach to peacebuilding. The conflict reached a stalemate in the late 1990s that made both the GOSL and

the LTTE willing to accept a ceasefire, enter into political negotiations, and address humanitarian and development needs. This balance of power shaped the peace process and kept the ceasefire agreement in place until changing international relations shifted the balance in favour of the government. The international aid donors were committed to making Sri Lanka a showcase for liberal peacebuilding and found like-minded partners in the market-friendly United National Party government and in the network around LTTE's chief negotiator (Lunstead 2007). Norway was found to be an acceptable facilitator by both domestic and international stakeholders, producing a peace process that was characterized by Norway's ownership approach, actively supported by the aid donors and international development organizations.

Höglund and Svensson (2011) observe that the principle of peace ownership permeated the process and determined its key characteristics, including who participated at the negotiation table and which issues were brought up for discussion. The Norwegian peace ownership approach placed the responsibility for peace in the hands of GOSL and LTTE, who were taken to represent the broader Sinhalese and Tamil communities. Other stakeholders were excluded from formal negotiations and there were no additional process aimed at building a broader consensus on peace. The political opposition, including major Sinhalese parties, the Muslim minority, non-LTTE Tamil actors and the broad diversity of civil society organizations, were largely excluded from the peace process. The peace ownership approach, therefore, made the dynamics and outcome of the peace process highly dependent on the positions and strategies of the protagonists. Since their claims to political legitimacy were highly contested, the peace process was also vulnerable to oppositional politicization on both sides. This was a serious concern due to the factionalized and ethnicized nature of post-colonial Sri Lankan politics (de Votta 2004). The combination of the GOSL-LTTE balance of power, Norway's peace ownership approach and entrenched political obstacles to conflict resolution, thus, produced a process that was narrowly defined both in terms of actors and in terms of the issues that were discussed (Stokke and Uyangoda 2011; Goodhand, Klem and Sørbo 2011).

The pragmatic strategy for peace that emerged from this interplay between international and domestic preconditions was to postpone and depoliticize rather than resolve the core political issues. The main components of this strategy were humanitarian rehabilitation in war-affected areas and normalization of market-led development throughout the island. The negotiations were largely confined to the content and implementation of the ceasefire agreement and to humanitarian needs, while state reforms to secure minority rights, devolution of power and substantive political representation gained less attention (Stokke and Uyangoda 2011). This strategy of using development as a precursor to peace made aid administration a main point of contention between the GOSL, LTTE and the Sinhalese opposition as it came to be linked to contentious questions of power-sharing and state sovereignty (Rainford and Satkunanathan 2011; Shanmugaratnam and Stokke 2008). Disagreements between the protagonists over interim administrative arrangements brought the negotiations to a stalemate and provided a political space for the opposition to mobilize against the peace process, the government and the role of the international actors. Subsequent attempts by the international aid donors to use conditionalities as leverage to restart the stalled peace negotiations further politicized the role of the international actors, and especially Norwegian facilitation.

The Sri Lankan peace process is an illustrative example of the internationalized liberal peacebuilding and Norway's approach to peace that emerged during the first decade after the end of the Cold War. Falling short of the expectations, however, the Sri Lankan process also shows the limitations in attempts to negotiate a peace deal without addressing core political issues and in using development as a substitute for substantive political transformations (Bastian 2007; Rainford and Satkunanathan 2011; Shanmugaratnam and Stokke 2008). The last phase of the conflict in Sri Lanka, when the GOSL and the LTTE returned to military means for ending the conflict, further demonstrated the limitations of Norway's approach to liberal peacebuilding. The GOSL's final military campaign against LTTE was enabled by changes in international relations that allowed the government to strengthen its political legitimacy and military capability. Most

importantly, the US-led “war on terror” provided a legitimizing framework for labelling, proscribing, and attacking the LTTE as a “terrorist” organization (Nadarajah and Sriskandarajah 2005). At the same time, the growing competition between USA, India and China in the Indian Ocean and their shared emphasis on state security created opportunities for acquiring military hardware, training and intelligence, and defusing international demands for resumed negotiations and protection of human rights. These changing international relations had a strong negative impact on Norway’s role as facilitator, as the state actor came to be seen as having the legitimate right to use violence to defend its sovereignty and security against terrorist insurgents. Whereas the negotiation process in Sri Lanka had represented an internationalization of peace that made the Norwegian approach highly relevant, the final stage of the armed conflict rendered this approach irrelevant. This experience, in turn, contributed to transformations in Norwegian discourses and practices of peace engagement.

Norway’s Peace Engagement in a Changing International Context

The previous sections have shown that Norway’s peace engagement discourse and strategies should be understood in the context of the transition from a bipolar world order during the Cold War to a unipolar liberal world order in the 1990s. Norway’s peace engagement can be seen as a strategic adaptation in a situation where its relevance and leverage in US-led security politics had been reduced while there were new opportunities for international influence through value diplomacy.

The triumphalist belief in the global spread of liberal democracy, market liberalism and liberal peace in the 1990s turned out to be short-lived, as dramatically demonstrated by the al-Qaeda attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11, 2001. The post-9/11 period has produced a discursive shift towards seeing distant intrastate wars as global security threats (Kaldor 2006). US foreign policy, as the foremost reference point for Norway’s

foreign affairs, underwent a radical transformation from the emphasis on liberal internationalism and peacebuilding during President Bill Clinton (1993-2001) to a focus on “homeland security” and “war on terror” under President George W. Bush (2001-2009). This securitization of peripheral conflicts shifted the balance in favour of state actors and state security rather than non-state actors and human security. Insurgency movements are increasingly portrayed as greed-driven terrorists rather than grievance-based struggles for justice and self-determination (Collier and Hoeffler 2001). Whereas the earlier representation legitimizes conflict resolution through political negotiations between state actors and insurgency movements, current discourse lends support to military interventions to combat terrorism and enhance state sovereignty and security. Whereas Norway’s peace engagement was an adaptation to international liberalism in the 1990s, the shift towards realism and the conservative approach to ending war has challenged Norway’s approach and been followed by adjustments in peace engagement discourse and strategies in the last decade.

Adjustments in foreign policy and peace engagement discourse

Norway’s peace engagement appears to be relatively stable. Two recent government reports to Parliament on foreign policy and development cooperation confirm the commitment to humanitarian assistance, development aid and peacebuilding, without announcing any major changes in the content of engagement politics (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009a, 2009b). The reports demonstrate, however, that there have been important adjustments in the general foreign policy discourse with implications for peace engagement.

The 2009 Government report on foreign policy and the broader foreign policy discourse since 2005, are characterized by a foregrounding of Norwegian interests (Lunde et.al. 2008; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009b; Støre 2008; Thune and Lunde 2013). This rehabilitation of interests appears to signify a return to the realist orientation that characterized the Cold War period, but this is only partly true since there is also an emphasis on the need to rethink the meaning of interests. The core argument is that globalization and the emergence of a multipolar world order means that the nature and geographic reach of

Norwegian interests have undergone radical changes. Pursuing Norwegian interests can no longer be confined to safeguarding territorial security, but must be based on a broader concept of interests, both thematically and geographically. The new interest politics is thus said to include promotion of ideals as well as state security and transnational economic interests. This point has been made in a number of political speeches, government documents and media reports in recent years (Lunde et.al. 2008; Støre 2008; Thune and Lunde 2013). Presenting the 2009 report in Parliament, the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that: 'Norwegian real political interests have been extended due to globalization. Norwegian engagement politics, within human rights, aid, peace and reconciliation, humanitarian efforts, are ethically justified but in addition also in Norway's interest' (Støre 2009, own translation). This means that the notion of interest has become the foremost nodal point in Norwegian foreign policy discourse, in contrast to the emphasis on values in the 1990s, but also that the meaning of interest has been broadened to include both the conventional meaning of interest in realism and the concept of value within idealism. Value politics has thus been institutionalized both as an aim in itself and as a means for the pursuit of other interests (Thune and Lunde 2013).

This discursive shift can be seen as an attempt to build a new consensus on Norwegian foreign policy around a broad notion of Norwegian interests in the context of changing international relations (Græger 2009). Realist critics of this new consensus have described it as a hollowing out of "real" interests, while idealist commentators have portrayed it as a weakening of value politics (Harpviken and Skjelsbræk 2010; Matlary 2009; Toje 2010). Despite such criticism, the merging of realism and idealism seems to be politically effective in the sense that there has been a realist readjustment in foreign policy without major contestations. A contributing factor is also the way this reorientation was done, as a participatory and public dialog that involved political parties, state institutions, mass media, non-governmental organizations, research institutions and the general public. This means that the adjustments in foreign policy discourse were already embedded in political and civil society by the time the 2009 Government report was presented to Parliament.

The significance of this new realism for peace engagement is that it is no longer seen as a matter of idealism but is instead an integral part of Norway's interest politics. The former Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Støre, who was the main architect behind the reorientation of foreign policy, stated in 2006 that: 'Our efforts for peace, reconciliation and development arises not only out of solidarity and respect for human dignity. Policies for peace is part of our security policy. This is both the main argument and a sufficient argument for the Norwegian peace policy' (Støre 2006, own translation). The discursive merging of ideals and interests that emerged in the 1990s has thus been institutionalized in foreign policy, but in a manner that subsumes peace engagement under a broadened notion of interests. This means that future involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding may to a larger extent be justified, designed and evaluated with reference to Norwegian interests, including the need to remain relevant and exert influence within arenas and alliances that are important for Norway's economic and security interests. In practice, it also means that Norway's peace engagement has been opened up for a combination of orthodox and conservative approaches to liberal peacebuilding. Norway's active participation in the joint military intervention in Libya in 2011 shows, on the one hand, that there is a new willingness to use hard power to end conflict and impose liberal peace. Norway's current involvement in peacebuilding in Burma/Myanmar, on the other hand, provides illustrations of adjustments also within the political approach to peacebuilding.

Norway's peacebuilding in Burma/Myanmar

Burma/Myanmar is now, after decades of authoritarianism, intrastate conflicts and underdevelopment, experiencing a democratic opening that many observers assume will be followed by a transition to liberal democracy, peace and development (Cheesman, Skidmore and Wilson 2010; Diamond 2012). Support for this optimism is found in a series of political changes, including release of political prisoners, lifting of media censorship, a widened space for political organizations, discursive shifts in favour of peace and democracy, and relatively free and fair by-elections that have brought the pro-democracy leader Aung San

Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) into parliament. The government has also signed a series of ceasefire agreements with armed groups and individual commanders from ethnic nationalities in conflict affected areas. In return, previously antagonistic Western actors (e.g. US, EU, Norway) have moved towards normalized diplomatic relations and lifted economic sanctions as a response to the changing discourses and reform policies from the Government of Myanmar (GoM).

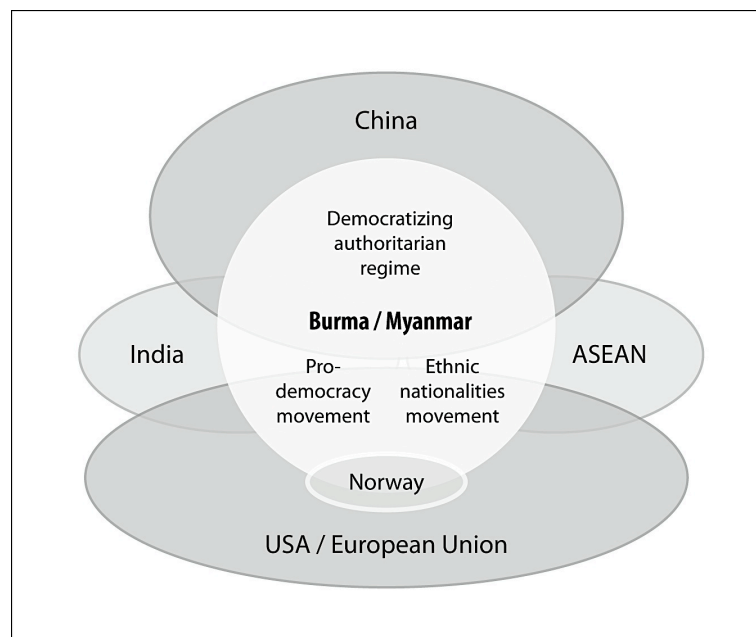


Figure 4. Domestic and international actors in the politics of democratization and peacebuilding in Burma/Myanmar.

The dynamics and extent of democratization and conflict resolution in Burma/Myanmar is a matter of debate. In explaining and predicting the political trajectory of change, different scholars place emphasis on the strength, strategies and relations among forces from “below” (the pro-democracy and ethnic nationalities movements), from “above” (the democratizing authoritarian regime) and from “outside” (states and international organizations) (Dittmer 2010; Nilsen 2013; Rieffel 2010) (Figure 4). Norwegian government discourse on Burma/Myanmar portrays the democratic opening as a window of opportunity created by reformists within the regime, but also that this is a

window that might close if the reformers are undermined by hardliners within the military and the ruling party (Callahan 2012; Diamond 2012). Hence, it is argued that it is crucial that international peace and democracy promoters seize the opportunity and provide support to the reformists and their democratization agenda. A more critical interpretation holds that the military and ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party are implementing their own program for “Discipline-flourishing democracy” without giving up any significant structural levers of power (Currie 2012; Egreteau and Jagan 2013). This has become a feasible strategy for continued power with international legitimacy, due to increased interest and emerging rivalry among four principal international stakeholders: USA, China, India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The top-down and controlled form of democratization that is currently under way indicates that the regime has substantive capacity and leverage to use democratic reforms to gain international legitimacy and concessions in a situation where Burma/Myanmar and Southeast Asia have gained new international relevance (Haacke 2006; Steinberg and Fan 2012; Vidra et.al. 2012).

These brief remarks indicate that democratization and peace in Burma/Myanmar raise critical questions about the power, strategies and relations among both domestic and international actors, and Norway’s role must be situated and interpreted with reference to these constellations (Figure 4). Norway has been a frontrunner for opening dialog with the regime (Currie 2012). Norwegian government officials have developed close contact and continuous communication with the regime, and have also offered symbolic and material incentives and rewards for political reforms. Norway has been among the first Western states to accept “Myanmar” as the country’s official name, suspend sanctions and to work with the government to deliver humanitarian assistance in war-affected areas. This means that Norway has functioned as an international door opener that could test the government’s sincerity and capacity for reforms and thereby do the groundwork for larger concessions by more powerful actors, especially the US and the EU. While Norway may appear to operate in a relatively autonomous manner, it can be assumed that its

engagement is conducted in close dialog with “like-minded” Western actors, thereby also supporting Norway’s international relevance and influence. It is also noticeable that Norway’s role in Burma/Myanmar seems to be used to create favourable conditions for Norwegian corporations.

The international politics of Norway’s peace engagement in Burma/Myanmar is also reflected in more concrete peacebuilding efforts. Norway has initiated and led the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative, which was designed to become a comprehensive international peacebuilding operation in ceasefire zones. While the protagonists generally welcome peacebuilding in areas that have been affected by protracted armed conflict, this initiative is also seen as controversial. The main reason for this is that Norway, which has been a reliable supporter of pro-democrats and ethnic nationalities, is now seen as working closely with the Government of Myanmar while lessening its links to opposition forces (Currie 2012). Norway’s peace engagement is thus accused of being biased in favour of the state and enabling the government to continue a long-standing practice of offering ceasefires and clientelist development initiatives rather than substantial political reforms (South 2008). This is congruent with peace engagement as a form of international alliance politics, but challenges the principle of impartiality that has been central to the Norwegian approach. It is also observed that the Norwegian initiative is restricted to post-ceasefire peacebuilding, while the responsibility for conflict resolution remains with the government and parliament. This separation between peacebuilding and conflict resolution, it is argued, may allow the regime to pursue a strategy of managing rather than resolving local conflicts, with active support from Norway’s peacebuilding efforts. While Norway’s peacebuilding initiative may thus be effective as a form of realist foreign policy, there are critical questions about its ability to promote positive peace.

These remarks support the argument that Norway’s peace engagement in Burma/Myanmar is more explicitly inscribed in Norwegian interest politics than what has been the case in earlier peace processes (for example in Sri Lanka). This is in agreement with the realist reorientation in Norway’s foreign policy, but

at the same time demonstrates the tension between the realpolitik of international alignments and the ideals of substantive democracy, peace and development (Harpviken and Skjelsbræk 2010).

Conclusion

The point of departure for this article has been the marginal position of small states in studies of international relations, despite historical and theoretical developments that could have facilitated increased attention to non-dominant actors in world politics. In an effort to address this knowledge gap, the article has examined the emergence and transformation of Norway's peace engagement since the end of the Cold War. Focusing on foreign policy discourses and practices, the article has portrayed peace engagement as an effort to resolve intrastate conflicts, but also as a strategy to support Norway's standing, relevance and influence in international relations. It is found that peace engagement represents a strategic adaptation to a situation where Norway's geostrategic relevance and leverage has been reduced while there was a widened international space for value diplomacy. In this situation, peace engagement became a priority in Norwegian foreign policy, both to promote peace as a global public good and to support Norway's standing and influence in international relations.

The article has also found that changing international relations after the turn of the century has challenged and reoriented Norway's peace engagement in a more realist direction. Contemporary foreign policy is thus characterized by a foregrounding of interests in foreign policy, in contrast to the centrality of values in the 1990s. This rehabilitation of interests reflects the centrality of globalization, multipolarity and new realism in international relations, but it is also found that the meaning of interest has been broadened to include the concept of value in idealism. Engagement politics has been institutionalized both as an interest in itself and as a means for the pursuit of other interests. Norway's peace engagement should thus be understood as a form of small state foreign

policy by non-conventional means: peace engagement allows Norway to overcome the weakness associated with smallness and to be recognized as “punching above its weight” internationally.

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